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ABSTRACT

The Bureau of Indian Affairs' (BIA) Chinle Agency mainstreamed 85% of its 230 special education students during the 1983-84 school year. A survey of the agency's regular education teachers revealed that many felt inadequately prepared to teach the mainstreamed special education student. Based on this information, the Special Education Office, in cooperation with the University of Arizona, implemented Project SERT (Special Education for Regular Teachers) training, providing graduate level instruction to 60 regular teachers for 4 months. Analysis of pretest/posttest results indicated that these teachers significantly improved in special education knowledge. Further, a questionnaire completed by participants at the end of the project showed that special education information received was implemented in the classroom. Although the training of regular teachers in special education knowledge and skills was limited to the Chinle Agency, the training program should be considered by all BIA schools. Assuming that the special education practices of the Chinle Agency are widespread, BIA schools are mainstreaming special education students into classrooms with regular teachers who may be inadequately prepared in special education knowledge and skills. In such cases it could be argued that BIA special education students are placed in restrictive mainstream environments which are providing an inappropriate education. (JHZ)

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Project S.E.R.T.

Special Education Training for Regular Educators of Native-Americans

By

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Project Director

1984

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Located in the Southwestern United States is the largest American Indian Tribe in the country (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Navajo Area 1986). The Navajo Nation's 192,000 members live in family camps on a 14,775,680 acre rural reservation (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Navajo Area 1986). Employment opportunities are in mining, agriculture and government service organizations with 15 percent of the Tribe's working age members employed (Navajo Nation, Division of Labor 1984). For the purchasing of goods and the acquiring of services, residents travel to four Reservation communities and five border towns.

Under the 1868 Treaty Between the United States of America and the Navajo Tribe of Indians, the United States agreed to:

> insure the civilization of the Indians entering into this treaty, the necessity of education is admitted and the United States agrees that, for every thirty children between said ages who can be induced or compelled to attend school, a house shall be provided and a teacher competent to teach elementary branches of an English education shall be furnished, who will reside among said Indians, and faithfully discharge his or her duties as a teacher. (KC Publications 1973 p.21)

Five Bureau of Indian Affairs Education Agencies are strategically located throughout the Navajo Reservation to expedite service in accordance with the Treaty of 1868. Academics are taught in accordance with Bureau of Indian Affairs regulations, state education legislation and Navajo Tribal education policies during a six and a half hour school day throughout a 180 day school year (Navajo Nation, Committee on Education 1984).

Special Education offerings are an important part of every Bureau of Indian Affairs schools' curriculum. Two thousand, five hundred Navajo children have been identified as being exceptional and are receiving instruction in accordance with P.L. 94-142 legislation (Bureau

of Indian Affairs, Branch of Exceptional Education 1986). To promote the Navajo handicapped child's Bureau education, mainstreaming is a common practice. Theoretically, mainstreaming enables the Navajo special education student to participate in academics and social environments implemented cooperatively by the regular and the special education teacher. The Bureau of Indian Affairs assume that through this cooperative effort the mainstreamed special education child is provided an appropriate education in a least restrictive environment.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chinle Agency is responsible for the education of kindergarten through high school age Navajo children who live within an 850 square mile boundary (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chinle Agency 1984). During the 1984-1985 school year, 10 schools instructed 3,500 Navajo children (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chinle Agency 1984). Special education instruction was provided by 9 special education teachers and 15 education aides to 230 special education students in 11 resource and 2 self-contained classrooms (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chinle Agency, Special Education Office 1984). A special education "related service" staff of a school psychologist, an educational diagnostician, a speech pathologist and 2 speech technicians provided services for children in special education classrooms. A Special Education Office staff, consisting of a coordinator, a secretary, a budget technician and a child-find technician coordinated program offerings (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chinle Agency, Special Education Office 1984).

During the 1983-1984 school year annual monitoring of the Chinle Agency's 15 special education programs, the Special Education Coordinator encountered regular teachers who expressed difficulty

in teaching the mainstreamed special education student. These teachers' concerns appeared to be that the mainstreamed environment was restrictive to the special education student because of the regular teacher's lack of special education knowledge and skills (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chinle Agency, Special Education Office 1983).

Because of these informal regular teacher expressed concerns, the Special Education Office surveyed the Chinle Agency's 120 regular teachers. The November 1984, survey assessed: 1) regular teacher feelings about teaching the mainstreamed special education student, 2) the amount of time the special education student spent in the regular classroom a day, 3) the number of special education students the regular teacher taught a day, and 4) if the regular teacher desired training in special education. One-hundred questionnaires were returned to the Special Education Office. Reported was that 90 regular teachers felt inadequately prepared to teach the special education student, 85 percent of the Agency's special education population was mainstreamed an average of 3 to 5 hours a day, and 90 regular teachers desired training in special education knowledge and skills (Foster 1984).

The Program

Based on the November, 1984, survey results, the Chinle Agency's Special Education Office, with funding from the Bureau's Office of Indian Education Programs, Branch of Exceptional Education, implemented Special Education for Regular Teachers training. Project S.E.R.T.'s purpose was to provide instruction to regular teachers in special education knowledge and skills. The evaluation of regular teacher special education knowledge shifts was through a Project prepared 100 question test with pretest/posttest results statistically treated

in accordance with a two-tailed t-test, at an alpha of .05, formula of $t=\frac{d}{\sqrt{SD/N}}$. A project prepared 11 item questionnaire assessed regular teacher impressions of the training and classroom usage of special education skills.

Ninety regular teachers, who had responded to the Special Education Office's survey, were Project surveyed by mail. Eighty-seven teachers returned the completed questionnaire with 78 indicating that they desire training. Sixty, of the 78, responding teachers were Special Education Coordinator selected for training based on their involvement with the mainstreamed special education student. Project requested demographic data revealed that these 60 regular teachers have been in the field of education an average of 8.22 years, a Bureau of Indian Affairs employee 9.22 years, an employee of the Chinle Agency 7.43 years and in their position five years. Thirty eight reported being elementary teachers, 3 stated that they were junior high school teachers, 14 indicated having responsibilities at the high school level, and 6 revealed that they had administrative responsibilities. Ethnicity was as follows: 38 American Indian, 3 Black, 1 Hispanic and 28 Anglo.

To ascertain special education knowledge and skill strengths and weaknesses and to establish topical areas for training, these 60 regular teachers were administered a Project prepared 100 question test a month before training. Correct answers were totaled for each test, statistically analyzed with a mean of 66.76 and a standard deviation of 8.17 computed. Incorrect answers of each test were also analyzed and indicated that training be focused on P.L. 94-142 and related mandates, assessment procedures, behavior management techniques and teaching methods applicable to the mainstreamed special education student.

The Department of Special Education faculty from the University of

Arizona provided 45 hours of graduate level instruction at 2 Agency centrally located sites. From January through May, 1985, 60 regular teachers met 3 times a month and received 17 hours of instruction in each of the pretest ascertained areas of P.L. 94-142 and related mandates, assessment procedures, behavior management techniques and teaching methods. Nine exercises were assigned with regular teacher responses evaluated and instruction adjusted accordingly.

At the Project's end, the 100 question test was administered to assess 60 regular teachers shifts in special education knowledge. Each test was evaluated with correct answers totaled. These correct answer scores were statistically treated with a mean of 79.88 and a standard deviation of 6.22 computed. Pretest/Posttest mean scores were compared with a t-score of 3.16 obtained and measured against a critical t-score of 1.96.

Sixty, 11 item questionnaires were administered on the last day of the Project. These questionnaires assessed regular teacher impressions of: 1) University of Arizona presentors, 2) special education knowledge and skills learned through the training, 3) special education knowledge and skills implemented in the classroom, and 4) the Project being offered to other Bureau of Indian Affairs regular teachers. Fifty-eight questionnaires were returned. Reported was that 55 regular teachers thought the training was good and applicable to their job. Fifty-eight teachers indicated that the University presentors were knowledgeable of topics and were good instructors. And, 53 teachers stated that the training was implemented in the classrooms. All returned questionnaires indicated that the Project should be offered to other Bureau of Indian Affairs regular teachers.

Conclusion

The Bureau of Indian Affairs, Chinle Agency, mainstreamed 85 percent of its 230 special education students during the 1983-1984 school year. A survey of the Agency's regular teachers revealed that many felt inadequately prepared to teach the mainstreamed special education student. Based on this information, the Special Education Office in cooperation with the University of Arizona implemented Project S.E.R.T. Graduate level instruction was provided to 60 regular teachers during a four month period. Statistical analysis of pretest/posttest results indicated that these regular teachers significantly shifted in special education knowledge. Further, an end of the Project questionnaire results reported that special education information received was implemented in the classroom.

Although the training of regular teachers in special education knowledge and skills was limited to the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Chinle Agency, these results should be considered by all Bureau schools. It seems that the Chinle Agency is a mirror of Bureau of Indian Affairs special education programming. Assuming that these special education practices are universal, all Bureau schools may be mainstreaming special education students into classrooms with regular teachers who may be inadequately prepared in special education knowledge and skills. Therefore, it could be argued that the Bureau of Indian Affairs enrolled special education student is being placed into a restrictive mainstreamed environment which is providing an inappropriate education. The Chinle Agency's Special Education Office has implemented an alternative. Will other Bureau of Indian Affairs schools follow this example?

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